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Wetlands Reserve Programs

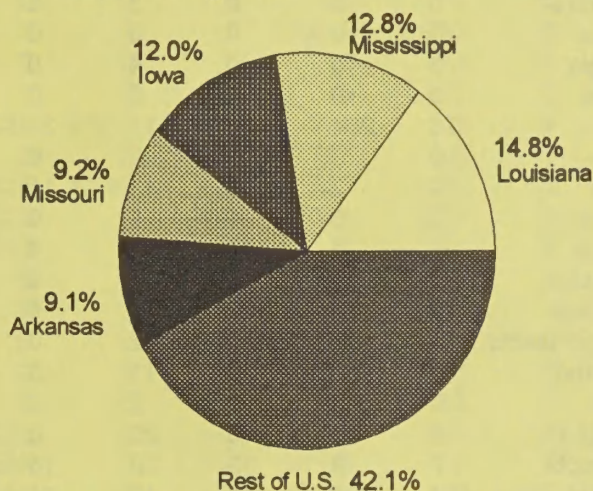
- As of mid-1997, enrollment in the Wetlands Reserve Program and the Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program stood at 533,026 acres in 43 States.
- Fifty-eight percent (308,648 acres) of the total was enrolled in Louisiana, Mississippi, Iowa, Missouri, and Arkansas.
- Landowners enrolled 88 percent (468,319 acres) of the total under permanent easements, 10 percent (51,521 acres) under 30-year easements, and 2 percent (13,186 acres) under 10-year restoration cost-share agreements.

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) was established in the 1990 Farm Act to restore prior-converted wetlands through the purchase of conservation easements from willing sellers. The Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP) was established in response to the 1993 flooding in the Upper Mississippi and Lower Missouri River basins, and is targeted specifically at prior-converted wetlands damaged by flooding in that region. The programs are administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) (See box, page 4 for more details).

Up to July 14, 1997, 443,556 acres had been enrolled under 2,471 contracts in the WRP, and 89,470 acres had been enrolled under 729 contracts in the EWRP, for a combined total of 533,026 acres under 3,200 contracts. The largest number of contracts occurred in Iowa (630), followed by Missouri (360), Louisiana (229), and South Dakota (216). The largest number of contracts outside the Mississippi River basin occurred in New York (169).

Acreage enrolled was highest in Louisiana (79,077 acres), followed by Mississippi (68,260), Iowa (64,062), Missouri (48,808), and Arkansas (48,441). The largest acreage enrollment outside the Mississippi River basin occurred in California (25,335 acres). Most of Iowa's acreage was enrolled under the EWRP, as was about half of Missouri's enrolled acreage. Other States with acreage enrolled in the EWRP are South Dakota (9,399 acres), Illinois (7,976), Minnesota (2,241), North Dakota (215), Kansas (142), and Nebraska (55).

States with largest acreages in WRP and EWRP, mid-July 1997



Source: USDA, ERS, based on NRCS data.

Prior to the 1996 Farm Act, wetlands were enrolled in the WRP and EWRP only under permanent easements (although finite-term easements were also authorized). The 1996 Farm Act required that NRCS enroll future WRP acreage under 30-year easements and restoration cost-share agreements as well as permanent easements, in roughly equal proportions. (EWRP enrollments are unaffected.) Thirty-year easements are purchased at 75 percent of the value of comparable permanent easements, and USDA pays 50-75 percent of restoration costs. Under restoration cost-share agreements (generally for a minimum of 10 years), no easement is conveyed, and USDA pays 50-75 percent of restoration costs.

For the 1997 signup, Louisiana had the largest acreage under permanent WRP easements (6,934 acres) as of mid-July 1997, Florida had the largest area in 30-year easements (13,000 acres), and Maine the largest area under the shorter-term restoration agreements (3,428 acres).

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About AREI UPDATES

AREI UPDATES is a periodic series that supplements and updates information in *Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators, 1996-97 (AREI)*, USDA, ERS, AH-712, July 1997. UPDATES report recent data from surveys of farm operators and others knowledgeable about changing agricultural resource use and conditions, with only minimal interpretation or analysis. Please contact the individual listed at the end of the text for additional information about the data in this UPDATE. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or have other questions about AREI UPDATES or AREI, contact Richard Magleby, (202) 694-5615, [rmagleby@econ.ag.gov]. AREI UPDATES are available on the ERS web site—<http://www.econ.ag.gov/Briefing/arei/arei.htm>—and on AutoFax (202) 694-5700 (wait until voice prompt gives all options, then press 4; when prompted again, enter 20200 and 20300 to get listings of available issues for 1996 and 1997).

Table 1—Wetlands Reserve Program and Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program contracts, 1992-97¹

State	1992	1993	1994	1995	1995	1996	1996	1997 WRP			1997	Total
	WRP	EWRP	WRP	WRP	EWRP	WRP	EWRP	Perm ²	30-Yr ³	C/S ⁴	EWRP	
	Number of contracts											
Alaska	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alabama	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	9
Arkansas	0	0	72	54	0	0	0	6	6	4	0	142
Arizona	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
California	12	0	8	15	0	7	0	10	2	11	0	65
Colorado	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	5	2	0	0	13
Connecticut	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Delaware	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Florida	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	22	1	0	23
Georgia	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Hawaii	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Iowa	78	284	66	11	39	38	87	22	5	0	0	630
Idaho	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	6	6	0	0	14
Illinois	0	2	28	13	15	21	0	5	12	0	0	96
Indiana	0	0	29	9	0	24	0	20	2	0	0	84
Kansas	0	4	18	21	0	23	0	5	0	0	0	71
Kentucky	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	4	0	3	0	20
Louisiana	40	0	88	74	0	0	0	13	13	1	0	229
Massachusetts	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Maryland	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	13
Maine	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	5	0	11
Michigan	0	0	0	20	0	14	0	16	0	0	0	50
Minnesota	7	9	19	30	18	16	0	33	2	0	0	134
Missouri	19	93	71	12	31	76	0	9	15	0	34	360
Mississippi	41	0	66	25	0	0	0	11	8	0	0	151
Montana	0	0	10	7	0	0	0	4	5	1	0	27
North Carolina	5	0	0	10	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	22
North Dakota	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	19	0	0	21
Nebraska	0	4	22	26	0	0	0	10	2	0	0	64
New Hampshire	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4
New Jersey	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	6
New Mexico	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nevada	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New York	3	0	10	12	0	27	0	36	73	8	0	169
Ohio	0	0	0	37	0	21	0	22	14	1	0	95
Oklahoma	0	0	0	23	0	0	0	19	12	0	0	54
Oregon	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	4	4	1	0	17
Pennsylvania	0	0	0	18	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	32
Rhode Island	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Carolina	0	0	0	25	0	0	0	11	11	1	0	48
South Dakota	0	49	42	39	58	0	0	13	15	0	0	216
Tennessee	0	0	15	13	0	0	0	4	2	0	0	34
Texas	0	0	7	5	0	0	0	4	3	2	0	21
Utah	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Virginia	0	0	9	7	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	20
Vermont	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Washington	0	0	4	27	0	0	0	15	5	2	0	53
Wisconsin	21	0	39	35	0	28	0	19	4	5	0	151
West Virginia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	3	0	9
Wyoming	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	6
U.S.	226	445	623	638	161	295	89	361	275	53	34	3200

¹Data current as of July 14, 1997. No acreage entered WRP in 1993 or EWRP in 1992 and 1994. ²Permanent easements.

³30-year easements. ⁴Cost-share agreements.

Source: USDA, ERS, based on WRP and EWRP program data, NRCS.

Table 2—Wetlands Reserve Program and Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program acres, 1992-97¹

State	1992	1993	1994	1995	1995	1996	1996	1997 WRP			1997	Total
	WRP	EWRP	WRP	WRP	EWRP	WRP	EWRP	Perm. ²	30-Yr. ³	C/S ⁴	EWRP	
Acres												
Alaska	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Alabama	0	0	0	858	0	0	0	0	381	0	0	1,239
Arkansas	0	0	16,081	15,424	0	3,867	0	6,014	5,199	1,856	0	48,441
Arizona	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
California	4,410	0	2,556	5,495	0	4,674	0	4,057	1,787	2,356	0	25,335
Colorado	0	0	0	503	0	0	0	838	203	0	0	1,544
Connecticut	0	0	0	112	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	112
Delaware	0	0	0	52	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	52
Florida	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13,000	2,800	0	15,800
Georgia	0	0	0	2,005	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,005
Hawaii	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Iowa	5,073	29,759	5,858	928	5,733	4,039	9,811	2,653	208	0	0	64,062
Idaho	0	0	0	102	0	0	0	972	787	0	0	1,861
Illinois	0	197	2,470	2,473	4,453	2,643	3,326	2,394	847	0	0	18,803
Indiana	0	0	1,675	476	0	1,306	0	1,096	2,548	500	0	7,601
Kansas	0	142	1,166	2,243	0	1,770	0	1,578	0	0	0	6,899
Kentucky	0	0	0	1,905	0	0	0	836	0	99	0	2,840
Louisiana	12,663	0	28,183	25,705	0	0	0	6,934	5,467	125	0	79,077
Massachusetts	0	0	0	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30
Maryland	0	0	0	1,177	0	0	0	105	0	0	0	1,282
Maine	0	0	0	500	0	0	0	189	0	3,428	0	4,117
Michigan	0	0	0	1,460	0	535	0	2,948	836	0	0	5,779
Minnesota	453	672	1,751	2,125	1,569	535	0	1,856	66	0	0	9,027
Missouri	1,696	11,172	4,699	1,869	7,067	12,206	0	2,779	1,420	0	5,900	48,808
Mississippi	11,751	0	26,705	20,451	0	0	0	3,732	5,621	0	0	68,260
Montana	0	0	0	859	0	0	0	615	480	40	0	1,994
North Carolina	5,703	0	2,802	1,340	0	0	0	131	455	0	0	10,431
North Dakota	0	0	0	0	0	0	215	0	2,910	0	0	3,125
Nebraska	0	55	1,408	5,634	0	0	0	1,076	64	0	0	8,237
New Hampshire	0	0	0	103	0	0	0	0	0	70	0	173
New Jersey	0	0	0	195	0	0	0	198	0	0	0	393
New Mexico	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nevada	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New York	45	0	401	951	0	1,528	0	4,217	2,892	75	0	10,109
Ohio	0	0	0	2,450	0	652	0	2,677	714	8	0	6,501
Oklahoma	0	0	0	12,590	0	0	0	2,344	1,184	0	0	16,118
Oregon	0	0	0	770	0	0	0	1,081	646	6	0	2,503
Pennsylvania	0	0	0	485	0	0	0	552	0	0	0	1,037
Rhode Island	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Carolina	0	0	0	4,142	0	0	0	442	602	18	0	5,204
South Dakota	0	4,260	3,411	2,394	5,139	0	0	1,330	1,295	0	0	17,829
Tennessee	0	0	1,876	4,166	0	0	0	576	200	0	0	6,818
Texas	0	0	2,440	6,731	0	0	0	447	409	500	0	10,527
Utah	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Virginia	0	0	161	462	0	0	0	160	102	0	0	885
Vermont	0	0	0	200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	200
Washington	0	0	626	2,289	0	0	0	1,982	1,033	35	0	5,965
Wisconsin	1,560	0	1,465	3,917	0	1,750	0	1,649	165	1,104	0	11,610
West Virginia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	190	0	66	0	256
Wyoming	0	0	0	37	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	137
U.S.	43,354	46,257	105,734	135,608	23,961	35,505	13,352	58,648	51,521	13,186	5,900	533,026

¹Data current as of July 14, 1997. No acreage entered WRP in 1993 or EWRP in 1992 and 1994. ²Permanent easements. ³30-year easements. ⁴Cost-share agreements.

Source: USDA, ERS, based on WRP and EWRP program data, NRCS.

USDA Wetlands Programs

USDA'S Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) and the Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program (EWRP) provide financial incentives for farmers to voluntarily restore and protect wetlands. The 1996 USDA Farm Act continued both programs providing for funding through the Commodity Credit Corporation and for greater flexibility in achieving goals of no net loss of wetlands. Also a pilot wetland mitigation banking program was established to determine how well such a system might work in agriculture.

Revised rules for WRP, issued October 1, 1996, require one-third of the program acres to be enrolled in permanent easements, one-third in 30-year easements, and one-third in restoration only cost-share agreements lasting 10 years or more. To be eligible for WRP and EWRP, lands must be restorable to a wetland environment suitable for wildlife habitat. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the USDA makes wetland determinations and the new rules provide the Secretary of Agriculture with the discretion to determine penalties for non-compliance with easements and agreements.

The extent USDA shares the cost of restoring lands to wetland status depends upon the length of easement or agreement. From 75-100 percent cost-sharing is provided for permanent easements, and 50-75 percent cost-sharing for 30-year easements and shorter term agreements. The 1996 Farm Act gives farmers more flexibility than in the past by permitting greater wetland mitigation and by providing more restoration options on individual tracts as long as the spirit of WRP is observed. The Act identifies individual practices which have minimal effects on wetlands, harmonizes regulations between WRP and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, and revises abandonment stipulations for cooperators.

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